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Bill sponsor offers opinion about news of pending veto

Lansing — The governor's anticipated veto of a bill that creates sensible, market-based rules for new specialty fund-raising plates and allows for the continuation of current fund-raising plates is unwarranted and unnecessary, Sen. Bruce Patterson, R-Canton, said today. Moreover, it would hurt Michigan charities and education.

"Specialty plates have already raised millions of dollars for Michigan's public universities and efforts to help children, protect wildlife and ensure water quality, among others," Patterson said. "Her veto puts these plates and the revenue they generate in jeopardy."

A standardized, uniform plate developed under current law ensures that confusion with multiple plates from other states is mitigated. Specialty plates follow a standard format that clearly identifies them with the word 'MICHIGAN' across the top of the plate.

"I'm confident that our specialty plates and those from other states are easily distinguishable," said Patterson. "When New York has the option of nearly 200 plates and neighboring states each have over 35 choices, law enforcement is correct that it needs a clear indication of a Michigan plate, but they already have it."

Senate Bill 785 establishes uniform rules for adding and removing specialty license plates. It repeals the sunset date of Oct. 1, 2005 so the current specialty fund-raising plates can continue to be sold and renewed. If the bill is vetoed and the sunset kicks in, current fund-raising plates, with the exception of the Olympic Training Center plate, would become null and void.

The legislation would require the plate's sponsoring organization to pay \$15,000 to cover start-up costs, saving taxpayers' money. At least 2,000 would have to be sold in the first year and 500 new plates each additional year. Those new plates would provide \$25 to the sponsoring organization for each plate sold, just as the existing plates do for universities and other causes.

The legislation has drawn strong support from Michigan Secretary of State Terri Lynn Land. Additionally, supporters of Michigan causes from education to breast-cancer research have supported the effort.

Separately, a breast-cancer research specialty plate bill, House Bill 4463, is before the governor after passage in the Senate and House of Representatives. The life expectancy of that legislation is unknown but would be threatened if SB 785 dies on the governor's desk.